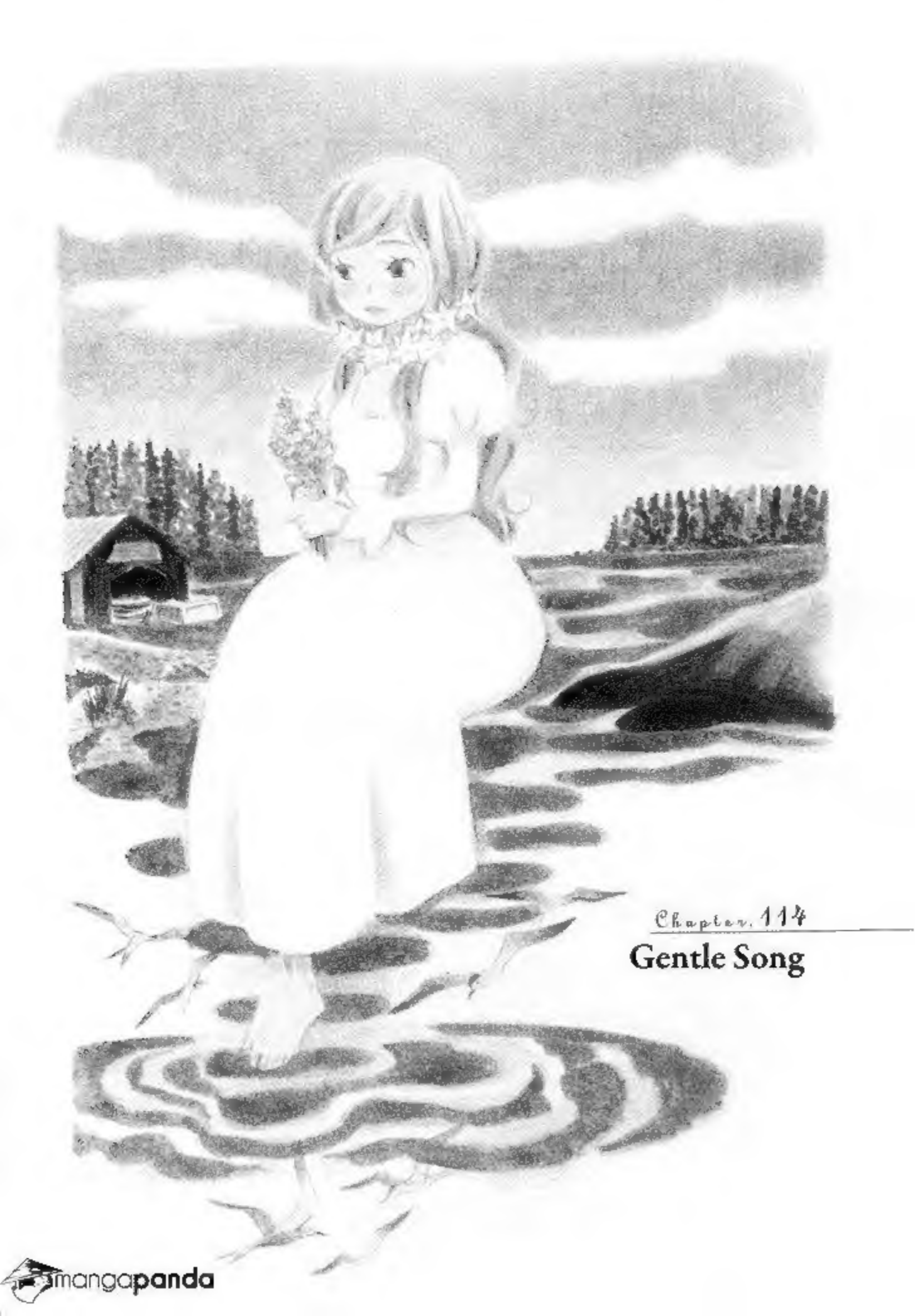

Chapter. 114

Gentle Song

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3月のライオン

March comes in like a lion

Chica Umino

That was it for their Dad.

He never came back again.

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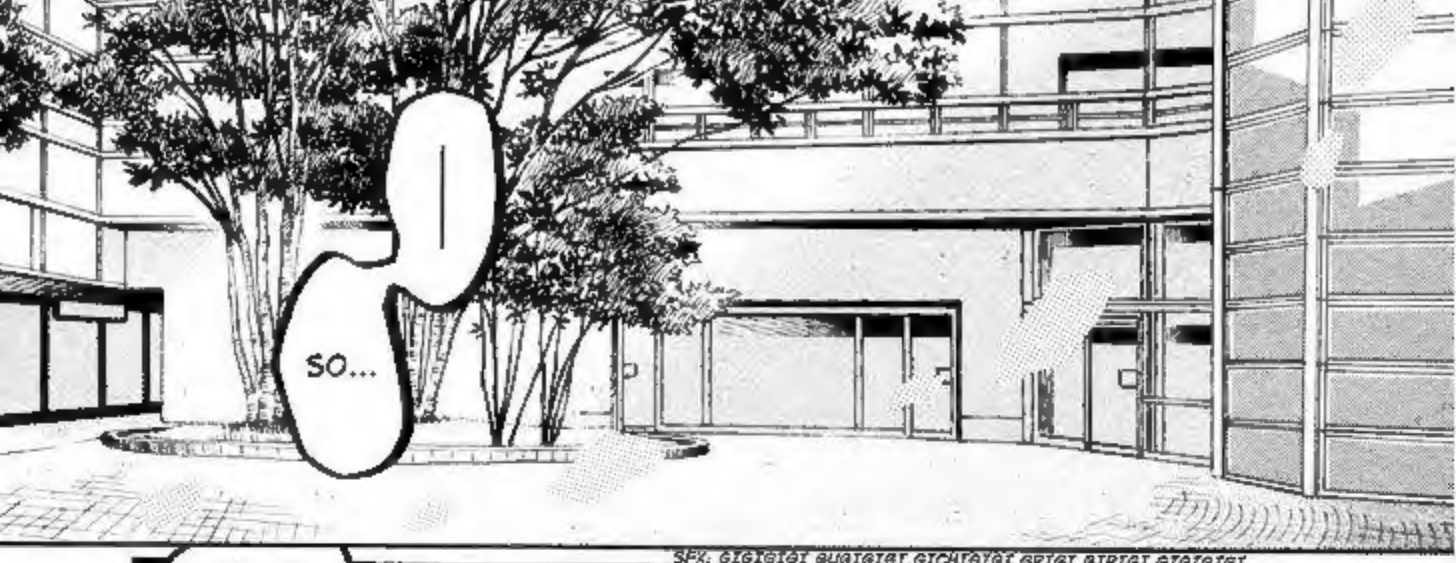
SO...

SFX: GIGIGIGI GUGIGIGI GIGIGIGI GRIGI GIRIGI GIGIGIGI
YEP, LOOKS LIKE I WAS RIGHT ON THE MONEY... —I AM SO GLAD I DIDN'T TELL YOU.
IF I WERE THERE, I WOULDDA SPLIT HIS HEAD OPEN WITH A RUSTY HATCHET !!
DAMMM IIIIT!!
SEIJI ROOOO OOOU!!
HAAAAA
SORRY... BUT WE WERE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR HEALTH...
OJII-CHAN...
I had a mountain 'a stuff I wanted to say ta that guy, ya know?!!!
while I was sleepin' here, not knowin' a thing about it...?!
all that stuff went on
Yer tellin' me

I AGREE.
WE'LL STAY ON ALERT, THOUGH...
DON'T THINK HE'S GOING TO COME BACK.
— BUT I REALLY

I THINK HE'S NOT GOING TO APPROACH ANYMORE PURELY OUT OF SHOCK.
BUT GETTING 'NEVER FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES' FROM TWO DAUGHTERS WORKED PRETTY WELL... OR RATHER,
SFX: KOKKURI. KOKU KOKU (NODDING) DOKI DOKI DOKI DOKI (HEARTBEAT)
...I mean, that really makes no sense...
Now why the hell would they think that??
I MEAN, WITH MEN, EVEN WHEN THEY'RE CRUELLY THROWN AWAY, FOR SOME REASON THEY STILL BELIEVE THAT WOMEN (INCLUDING DAUGHTERS) 'SHOULD STILL A---LWAYS LOVE ME☆'...
Ah, thank you.
SFX: GARA GARA GARA...
Kawamoto-saaan! It's lunch time!
NOT THAT I KNOW WHAT HIS THOUGHT PROCESS WAS
THAT MADE IT END UP THAT WAY.
"Ah, thank you very much.
—BUT AKARI... SEEMS PRETTY BEATEN DOWN...
PROB-ABLY BECAUSE SHE DOESN'T LIVE BY THE IDEA OF 'KEEPING STEADY', SHE LIVES BY 'I HAVE TO KEEP STEADY.'
—SO, KID, ABOUT WHERE THINGS ARE GOING FROM HERE,
MUST BE REALLY TAXING FOR HER.
SO HAVING TO STAY IN BED FOR SO LONG...
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SFX: DOKKIIINNN GYANN KAAAHH
I HEARD WHAT HAPPENED.
SO, YOU PROPOSED TO MY GRAND-DAUGHTER, DID YA?
I-I'M SORRY FOR
TAKING SO LONG TO REPORT IT.
I KNOW I BROUGHT IT UP VERY SUDDENLY,
BUT I HAD BEEN THINKING ABOUT IT FOR SOME TIME BEFORE THEN, SO I DID NOT SAY THAT WITH ANY SORT OF HALF-HEARTED FEELINGS!
I FERGIVE YA.
I'VE BEEN SAVED MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY BY HINA A TON OF TIMES UP TO THIS POINT!
YEAH, SO LIKE I SAID, YOU'RE FORGIVEN.
WAIT... HUH?
A-AND

ACTUALLY, FORGIVE AIN'T THE RIGHT WORD.
I ACTUALLY THINK THAT'S PRETTY GOOD.
YOU'RE ALWAYS BEING SUCH A SOURCE OF STRENGTH FER HINA.
WITH ME, WHEN I WAS A KID,
BOTH MY PARENTS AND MY LITTLE BROTHER DIED IN THE CONFUSION AFTER THE WAR.
—— THIS MIGHT NOT RESONATE MUCH WITH YOU ALL IN JAPAN THE WAY IT IS TODAY,
BUT THE WHOLE RYOUGOKU AREA... WAS A PRETTY AWFUL PLACE.
I STILL DREAM ABOUT IT SOME-TIMES.

AS A KIND 'A COMRADE IN ARMS...
WE GREW UP IN DIFFERENT ERAS, BUT FOR SOME REASON I JUST THOUGHT OF YOU
— SO WHEN I MET YOU
IT REMINDED ME OF ME WHEN I WAS A KID.
— ALL I'D DO WAS FEVERISHLY SEARCH FOR A WAY TA KEEP LIVING...

TO BEING ONE OF THE ONLY 160 PRO SHOGI PLAYERS IN ALL OF JAPAN.
YOU WENT FROM HAVIN' NOTHING,
ALWAYS WORKING HARD, NEVER THROWING IN THE TOWEL NO MATTER HOW TOUGH IT GETS.
I IMAGINE YOU

WILL BE A BIG HELP TO MY GRAND-DAUGHTER.
THAT'S HOW I FEEL.
AND
THAT TENDENCY 'A YOURS TO OBSESS ABOUT THINGS

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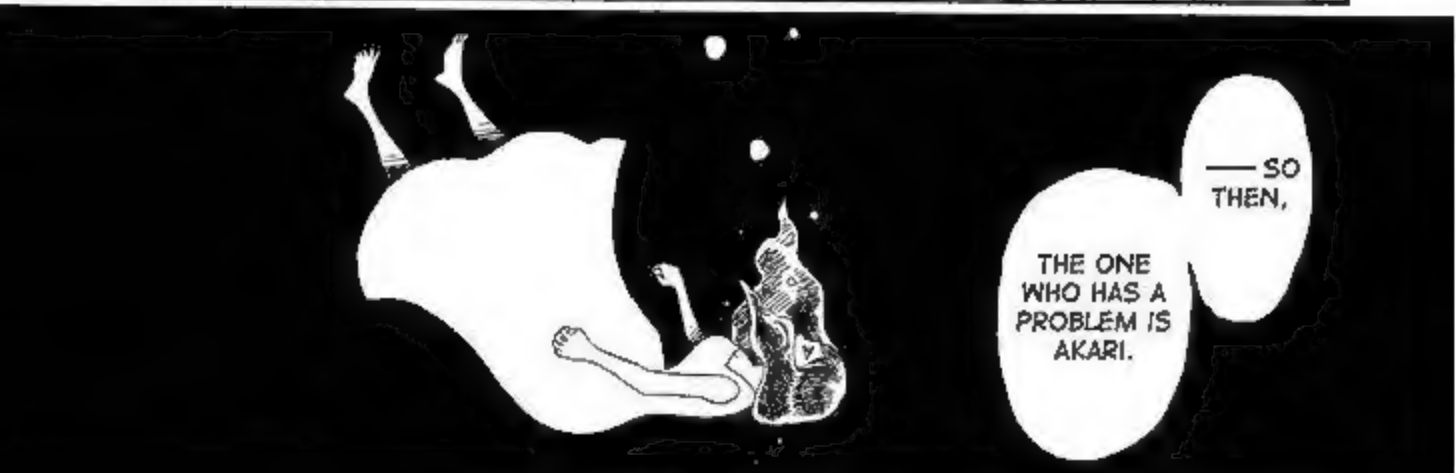
HMMM...
I MEAN, THAT GIRL MAY BE IN HIGH SCHOOL, BUT ON THE INSIDE SHE'S KIND OF LIKE AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLER...
HE'S RIGHT.
It could take another 4 to 5 years, though... .....To persuade her...
MMM...
YOU'RE RIGHT...
Well, I thought it would be nice if I can communicate it to her by the time I'm 20.....
...OKAY...
IT JUST DEPENDS ON WHETHER OR NOT HINA SAYS 'yes'.
UKYAHOOOOH
I'll need you to consider Hina's feelings first and foremost.....
YEAH, SO NOW
MMM...
SO IF I CAN ENTRUST THAT TO YOU,
—— I'D BE THANK-FUL.
NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY, I AIN'T GONNA BE AROUND TO WATCH OVER MY GRAND-DAUGHTER FOR HER WHOLE LIFE.


—— SO THEN,
THE ONE WHO HAS A PROBLEM IS AKARI.

THE PAIN OF HAVING TO CARRY OTHERS.
AND THEN RAISED TWO YOUNGER SISTERS.
SHE CARED FOR HER MOTHER AND GRAND-MOTHER ON THEIR DEATHBEDS
AKARI'S SUFFERING IS DIFFERENT FROM THE KIND YOU OR ME HAVE...

AND SHE MANAGED TO PUSH FORWARD AND DO JUST THAT.
SO HER LITTLE SISTERS WOULDN'T BE LONELY,
SHE STARTED DRESSING AND TALKING LIKE A MOTHER.
WHY...
WHY WOULD SHE GO THAT FAR...?
WELL, SEE, THAT'S BECAUSE AKARI
FELT IT WAS HER FAULT.

They say that 'children are a bond between husband and wife'
but I couldn't do anything.
I let Mom die all alone...
I MEAN, NONE OF ANY OF THAT WAS AKARI'S FAULT...
BUT NO MATTER HOW MUCH I TOLD HER THAT, SHE WAS SO CONVINCED OF IT SHE WOULDN'T BUDGE.
—IT WAS SO SAD.
BECAUSE THAT GIRL LOVED HER MOM AND DAD.

I TOLD HER 'JUST GO OUTSIDE ONCE IN A WHILE!' AND FORCED HER TO GO.
ONE DAY, WHEN THERE WAS A CLASS REUNION AND AKARI SAID 'IT'S OKAY, I DON'T HAVE TO GO TO THAT.'
Bye bye!
Thank you, Auntie!
Dressing up
Enjoy yourself! It's okay if you're back laate!
AND PUTTING ALL HER TIME INTO HELPING OUT AT MIKAZUKI TEMPLE.
AKARI CONSTANTLY HAD MOMO ON HER BACK
SO WHILE GIRLS HER AGE WERE DOING THINGS LIKE GOING TO COLLEGE,
LIKE DATING, AND TRAVELING
wawaaahh! Hold on! Hold on, just a second!
HOW AAAA AA~
YEAH, ME, TOO...
— BUT SHE ALWAYS BRINGS HER TWO LITTLE SISTERS ALONG, RIGHT?
THAT KAWA-MOTO ...
I REALLY HAD A THING FOR HER, BUT...
HEEY...
HAHA
I KNOW, RIGHT ...?
IT MAKES HER FEEL KIND OF... 'HEAVY'.
KAWAMOTO-SAN SURE SEEMS LIKE SHE'S WAY MORE ADULT... OR LIKE...
SHE'S KIND OF WORN OUT... LIKE THE LIFE SHE'S LIVING NOW KINDA SHOWS THROUGH.
Wel Com
Sangatsu Middle Class
AH!!
AKARI!!!!!
YOU'VE BEEN HAVING PROBLEMS AT HOME, RIGHT?
Is everything okay?
I haven't seen you in forever !!

WHEN SHE CAME TO LET ME KNOW THAT YOU WERE 'THINKING ABOUT MARRYING HINA'
AKARI WAS REALLY HAPPY.
I never imagined that Kiriyama-kun thought of her that way
Waaaah, what do we do?
Akari-chan, that dress makes you look like a princess!
Sooo. I came home! Eheheh
-So because of that, it was kinda hard to stay there.
Onei-chan, you look so cute!
Akari~ ~~~
Q Q ...
—BUT THIS IS WHAT SHE SAID ..
IF HINA LEFT WITH YOU AFTER HINA HAD RELIED ON HER FOR SO LONG
—BUT AT THE SAME TIME
SHE WAS ALSO PROBABLY THINKING ABOUT HERSELF
UNTIL MOMO GOES OFF TO COLLEGE AND GETS A JOB
I STILL HAVE A LONG ROAD OF HARD WORK AHEAD OF ME —— AT LEAST

What's the right move to make here?!
What should I do?!
I COULDN'T SAY ANYTHIN' TA THAT
I THOUGHT ABOUT HOW OLD AKAR WOULD BE WHEN THAT HAPPENED
SHE'D BE 40...
THE TOP OF B1, DOI-SAN, IS GETTING DEVOURED!!
KOOOO
It looks like he's about to head-butt the board!!
THAT KIRIYAMA. IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOT SOME SERIOUS CONCENTRATING GOING ON.
What do I do so everyone can get somewhere brighter?!
KUH
What do I do?
What? What?

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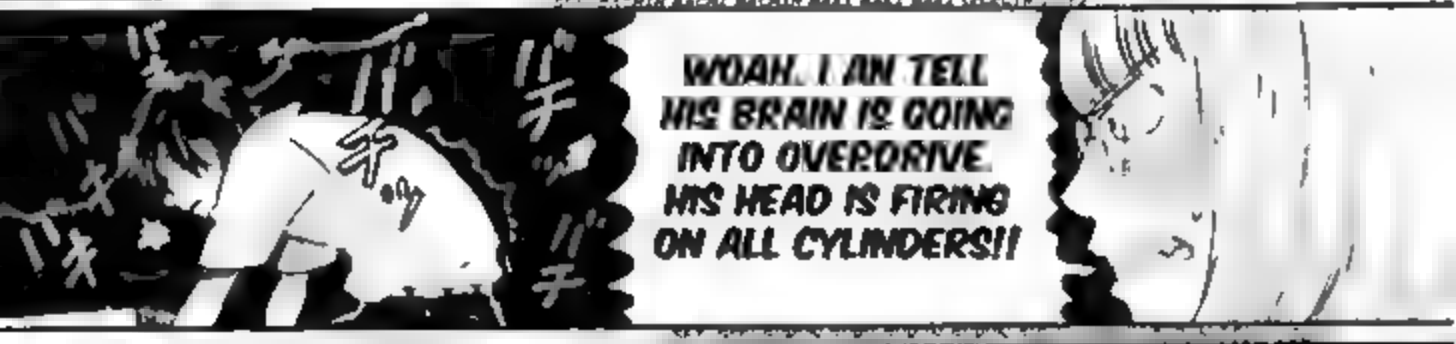
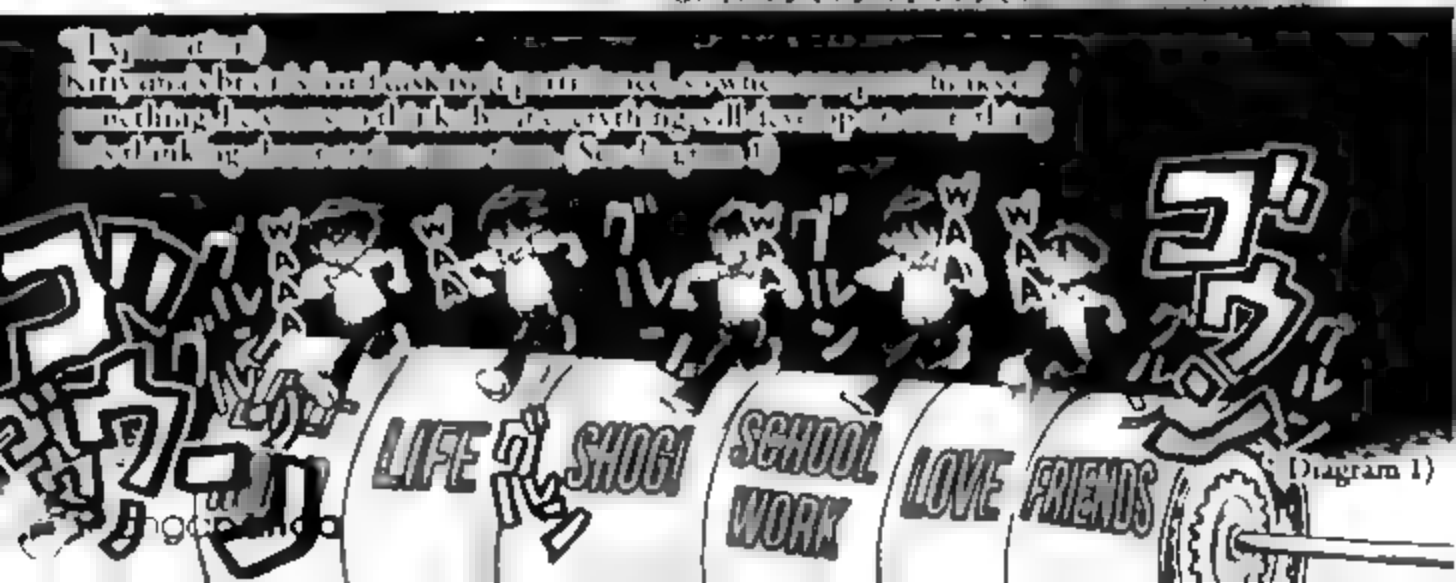
2-2
Fu
First I need to win!!
WHAT
What can I do?
DO I DO?
What do I do?!
The whole Kawamoto family
Shogi
Akari-san
Hina-chan
Title Matches
2-4 Kaku
Rank-deciding matches
3rd Group Preliminaries
Same Kin
I need to win
Matches
I need money
Number of matches
Same Hi


WOAH. I AN TELL HIS BRAIN IS GOING INTO OVERDRIVE. HIS HEAD IS FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS!!


LIFE
SHOGI
SCHOOL WORK
LOVE
FRIENDS

(Diagram 1)

SFX: PAN PAN DOSSARI (HEAPS)
HEY, SMITH
—I'M REALLY INTERESTED IN WHAT'S GOING ON WITH HIS MATCH RIGHT NOW, BUT
—BUT I'M EVEN MORE INTER-ESTED
どっさー
THAT LOOK LIKE THEY'RE BURSTING OUT FROM HIS BAG. .
IN THE TONS OF CATALOGS AND PAMPHLET-LOOKING THINGS
'RENOVATION TO MAKE YOUR HOME JUST LIKE A NEW BUILDING' Q & A
'2-FAMILY RESIDENCE QUICK-UNDER STANDING GLIDE', A SMALL PLOT OF LAND IS OKAY! ☆ 3-STORY BUILDING SPECIAL EDITION'
MM I'M QUITE CONC-ERNED ABOUT THAT AS WELL
What—is going on with Hasu? He's renovating? Uh, wasn't his ranking? Or maybe his girl caught up in the moment and bought a second-hand house? And didn't tell us about it...? When he's only 19 years old?
By the way, Kuryama-kun, how much money are you going to have to spend on it? Are you getting a loan from the bank?
Deep bow.
AH, LOOKS LIKE THE GAME'S OVER
THANK YOU VERY MUCH
Won.
—UH, DOI-SAN, DON'T YOU THINK YOU'RE GETTING A BIT TOO INTO HIS RENOVATION THING?!!
THAT WAS QUICK. IT'S LIKE 4 O'CLOCK, RIGHT?
I SEE
DAMMIT!
—SO THEN UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, THERE'S A LIMIT TO HOW MANY EXPANSIONS OF THE BUILDINGS WE CAN MAKE, HUH ?
I GET HOW 'BUILDING-TO-LAND RATIO' WORKS!!
OKAY
—IN THAT CASE, GETTING A BIGGER SECONDHAND HOUSE NEARBY WOULD BE BETTER THAN MAKING EXPANSIONS
—SO THEN IF I GET A SECONDHAND HOUSE, THEN LOAN AMOUNT FROM THE BANK WILL GO DOWN, SO THEN INCOME WILL BE A PROBLEM.
I GUESS THEN JUST FOCUSING PURELY ON THE TITLE MATCH PRELIMINARIES WON'T WORK, I'LL NEED TO STUDY EVERYTHING !!
ゴオオオ

I'VE JUST GOT THIS FUZZY SEN-SATION ..
LIKE A DOOR IS ABOUT TO OPEN...
LIKE SOMETHING ABOUT TO CLICK INTO PLACE .
BUT.. WHAT WAS THAT?! I'VE BEEN SENSING SOMETHING FOR A WHILE NOW.
SFX BORO BORO (CRUMPLING)
— FOR SOME REASON, I JUST COULDN'T SOLVE THAT ONE PROBLEM. INGENIOUS SHOGI PROBLEMS #99 SMOKE MATE, 117-MOVE MATE, FINALLY!!!!
I first started on that problem in elementary school and now, 8 years later, I finally solved it?!!! Step-Dad, I did it!!!
WITH 5-6 RYUU, THERE'D BE A DISCOVERED CHECK, THROUGH WHICH I COULD FORCE A 5-5 FU RATIO!! THEN I'D JUST NEED TO CORNER THEM AT THE EDGE...
*His brain is having a fever!!
SFX GAKU GAKU (SHAKING)
5-6 Ryuu
HA!!
OOOO OOOO !!!
THAT'S RIGHT! 5-6 RYUU!!
SFX PAKIIITNNN'N'
T/N: INGENIOUS SHOGI PROBLEMS (SHOUGI ZUKOO) IS A FAMOUS SHOGI BOOK WRITTEN BY KANJU ITOU IN 1756 SAID TO BE THE MOST PROMINENT COLLECTION OF MATING SHOGI PUZZLES IN THE EDO ERA.

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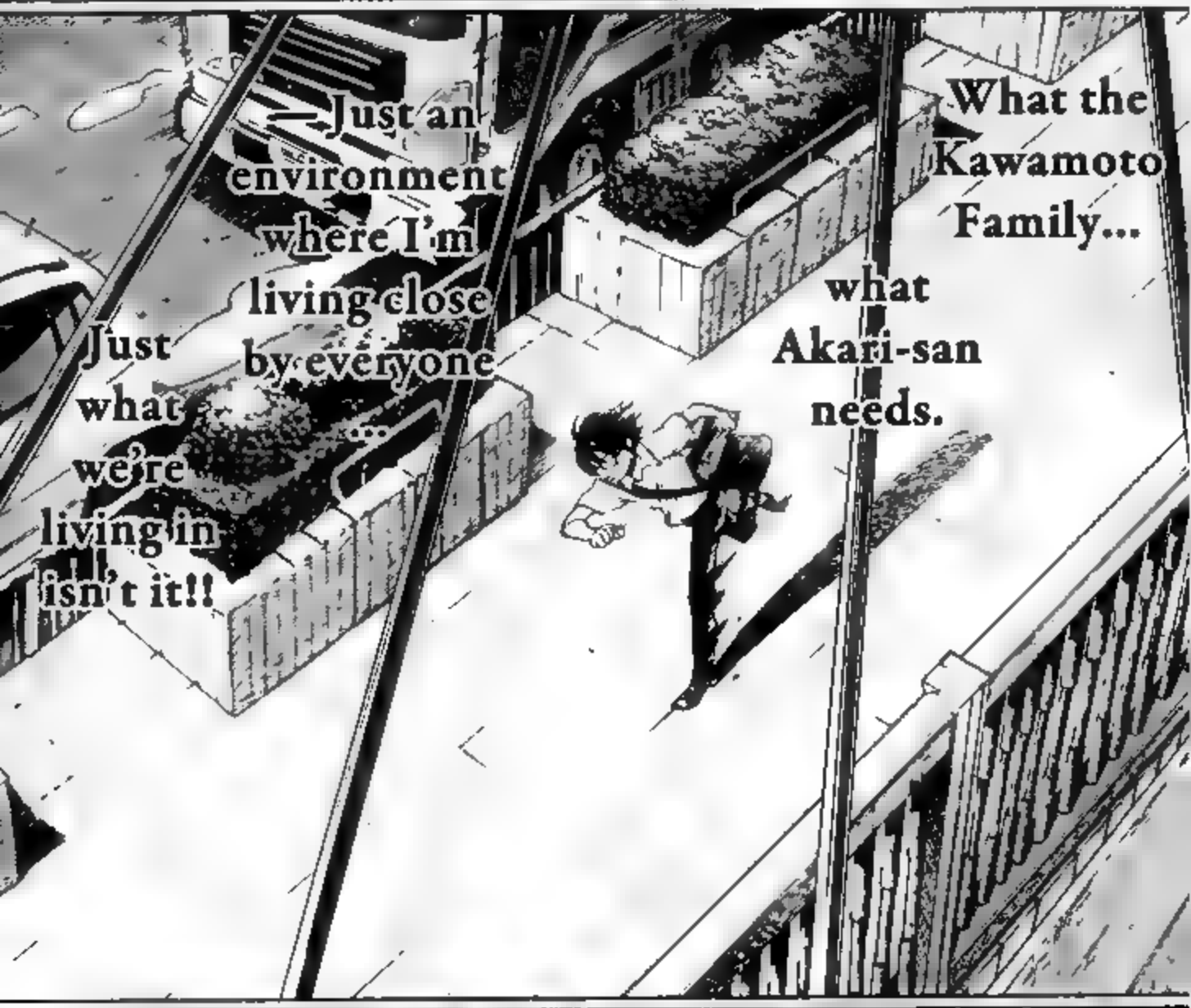
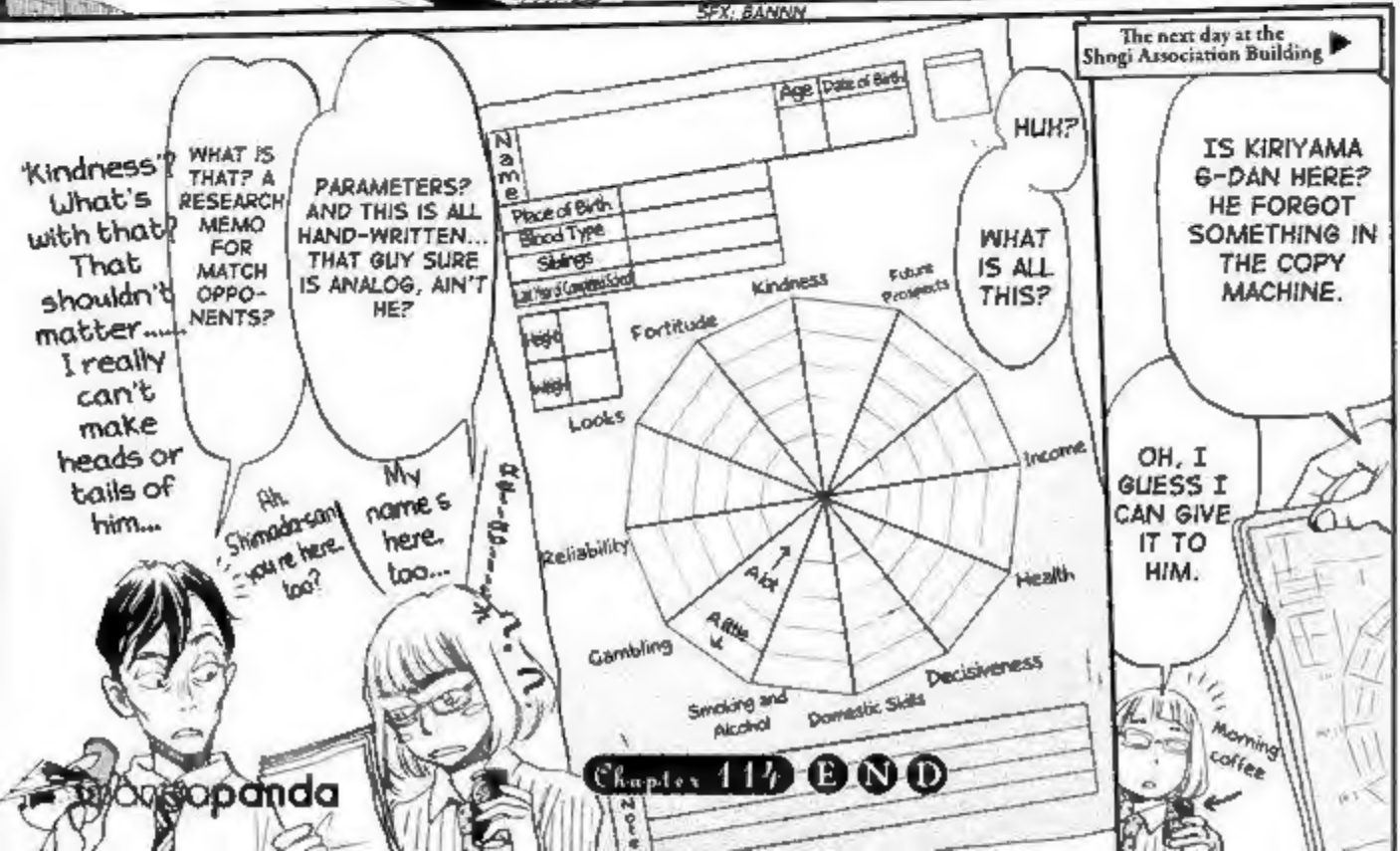
I've got it.


Just an environment where I'm living close by everyone
Just what we're living in isn't it!!
What the Kawamoto Family...
what Akari-san needs.

What Akari-san needs
is someone to be there with her,
someone to support her,
a life partner!!!!

I see what I have to do...!!
—I see it now
.....
Perfect Paper

SFX: BANNN


The next day at the Shogi Association Building
IS KIRIYAMA 6-DAN HERE? HE FORGOT SOMETHING IN THE COPY MACHINE.
OH, I GUESS I CAN GIVE IT TO HIM.
Morning coffee
HUH?
WHAT IS ALL THIS?
Name
Age
Date of Birth
Place of Birth
Blood Type
Siblings
Looks
Kindness
Future Prospects
Fortitude
Income
Health
Decisiveness
Domestic Skills
Smoking and Alcohol
Gambling
Reliability
A little
Alot
'Kindness'? What's with that? That shouldn't matter..... I really can't make heads or tails of him...
WHAT IS THAT? A RESEARCH MEMO FOR MATCH OPPONENTS?
PARAMETERS? AND THIS IS ALL HAND-WRITTEN... THAT GUY SURE IS ANALOG, AIN'T HE?
Ah, Shimada-san, you're here, too?
My name's here, too...
Chapter 11 END

Umino and Her Happy Friends

SORRY TO KEEP YOU WAITING. 3-GATSU NO LION HAS FINALLY MADE IT TO 11 VOLUMES!!

I WANT TO ONCE AGAIN DEEPLY THANK EVERYONE WHO'S READING THIS BOOK.

I THINK IT'S BECAUSE OF ALL THE PEOPLE AWAITING IT THAT, DESPITE CRYING AND ROLLING AROUND, I'VE BEEN ABLE TO GET EACH PAGE DONE ONE BY ONE.

SFX: ZAZAAN ZAZAAAN

IN 3-GATSU NO LION

I'VE HAD THE PLEASURE OF DRAWING THE JOURNEY OF THE PROTAGONIST, REI, AS HE GAINS MORE AND MORE 'THINGS HE CAN DO' EACH VOLUME

AND SLOWLY BECOMES MORE OF AN ADULT.

IT'S BEEN IN VERY GRADUAL STEPS —— BUT THAT IS WHAT I THINK HUMAN GROWTH IS.

I DON'T THINK HUMANS CAN CHANGE ALL THAT QUICKLY.

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MAYBE IF YOU LOOK AT MY JOURNEY FROM A DISTANCE IT LOOKS LIKE ONE LONG POLL GOING STRAIGHT UP.

—BUT JUST LIKE HOW A 'SPRING' LOOKS LIKE IT JUST TWISTS AROUND AND AROUND IN ONE SPOT BUT SLOWLY RISES UP IN A SPIRAL PATTERN,

EVEN NOW THE 'CORE OF ME' IS STILL NO DIFFERENT FROM ME WHEN I WAS IN KINDERGARTEN. I'M ALWAYS SPINNING IN CIRCLES WORRYING

I THINK IT'S MORE OF A GRADATION OVER THE COURSE OF EXPERIENCING THOUSANDS OF LITTLE EVENTS...

QUITE A LOT OF TIME HAS PASSED BEFORE I BECAME AN 'ADULT', BUT THERE WAS NEVER ANY SORT OF 'BOUNDARY LINE' THAT SPECIFICALLY SEPARATED MY CHILDHOOD FROM MY ADULTHOOD.

*I THINK I MAY SOMEDAY DRAW THIS STORY IN LION

I WANT TO SHOW MY HEARTFELT APPRECIATION TO THEM...

BECAUSE OF THEIR SONG I WAS ABLE TO PROPERLY THINK ABOUT 'REI-KUN' AND 'MYSELF' ONCE AGAIN. THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH.

THE IMPETUS FOR MY WRITING THIS STORY WAS THE BEAUTIFUL WORDS AND MELODY OF THE SONG 'FIGHTER' BY BUMP OF CHICKEN.

IT'S THE STORY OF REI GOING FROM WHEN HE WAS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TO THE PRESENT.

STARTING ON THE NEXT PAGE IS A SHORT STORY CALLED 'FIGHTER'.

—NOW THEN, GO ON AND MEET THE REI-KUN

FROM BEFORE '3-GATSU NO LION' VOLUME 1 BEGAN.

AND I HOPE I CAN MEET YOU LIKE THIS AGAIN IN THE NEXT VOLUME.

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3月のライオン

March comes in like a lion
Chica Umino

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